DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 864 EC 303 737

AUTHOR Repetto, Jeanne B.; And Others
TITLE The Relationship between Dropout Prevention and Transition for Secondary School Students with Mild Disabilities. Monograph No. 1993-R1.
INSTITUTION Florida Univ., Gainesville. Dept. of Special Education.
SPONS AGENCY Florida State Dept. of Education, Tallahassee. Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 60p.; A product developed by Project RETAIN: Retention in Education Technical Assistance and Information Network, a part of the Florida Network. For a related document, see EC 303 738.
AVAILABLE FROM Clearinghouse/Information Center, Bureau of Student Services and Exceptional Education, Suite 628, Florida Education Center, 325 W. Gaines St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; Delphi Technique; *Dropout Prevention; *Educational Practices; Education Work Relationship; Feasibility Studies; *Mild Disabilities; Opinions; *Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Secondary Education; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Florida

ABSTRACT

Project RETAIN (Retention in Education Technical Assistance and Information Network) is a Florida project to assist school districts through identification and dissemination of effective practices that keep students with mild disabilities in school. One part of the project attempted to establish a consensus among experts in the fields of transition, special education, and dropout prevention on effective practices with this population. A three-round Delphi procedure was used to elicit the opinions of 10 national experts in four domains--organizational, programming, personnel, and social. A total of 180 effective practices were identified and grouped into 10 thematic areas. Panelists were also asked to rank the feasibility of identified practices. The experts agreed that good programs to prevent students with mild disabilities from dropping out should be realistic, student-centered, and flexible; provide wrap-around services; set limitations for which students and personnel are accountable; tie into real world demands; offer a place where students feel they belong and are wanted; encourage professional development; provide supportive administrators; foster intra-and interagency collaboration and cooperation; and view students holistically. Low feasibility ratings were given to practices considered valid but which involved major changes in belief systems or school systems. (Contains 27 references.) (DB)

ED 379 864

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Information and Services for Adolescents and Adults with Special Needs

Florida NETWORK

The Relationship Between Dropout Prevention and Transition for Secondary School Students with Mild Disabilities

Monograph Number 1993-R1

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. M. Duncan
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students
Division of Public Schools
Florida Department of Education

1993

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EC 303 737

This product was published by Project RETAIN, a part of *Florida* Network: Information and Services for Adolescents and Adults with Special Needs, funded by the State of Florida, Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.

Copyright
State of Florida
Department of State
1993

Authorization for reproduction is hereby granted to the state system of public education as defined in section 228.041(1), Florida Statutes. No authorization is granted for distribution or reproduction outside the state system of public education without prior approval in writing.

The Relationship Between Dropout Prevention and Transition for Secondary School Students with Mild Disabilities

Monograph Number 1993-R1

Jeanne B. Repetto, Ph.D.

University of Florida

Anne DePalma Hankins, M.Ed.

University of Florida

Stuart E. Schwartz, Ed.D.

University of Florida

Florida Network
University of Florida
Department of Special Education
G315 Norman Hall
Gainesville, Florida 32611-2053
(904) 392-0701 • FAX (904) 392-2655

Table of Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction 1

- Dropout Demographics 2
- Reasons Students Drop Out 4
- Dropout Prevention Strategies 4
- Transition Dropout Prevention Strategies 5

Rationale for Study 7

Methodology 9

- Conceptualization 9
- Selection 10
- Survey Development 10
  - Round 1 10
  - Domains 11
  - Round 2 12
- Data Analysis 14
- Organization of Data 14
  - Round 3 14
  - Themes 15

Results and Implications 19

- Validity 20
  - Domains 20
    - Organization Domain 21
    - Programming Domain 24
    - Personnel Domain 24
    - Social Domain 30
- Feasibility 30
  - Least Feasible 34
  - Most Feasible 35

Summary 37

References 39

Preface

Project RETAIN: Retention in Education Technical Assistance and Information Network was developed in response to a Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students request for proposal entitled *IDEA, Part B., Special Project, 1992-93: Using Career Preparation as Proactive Dropout Prevention for Students with Mild Disabilities.* Funding was awarded to *Florida* Network: Information and Services for Adolescents and Adults with Special Needs, housed in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida, to administer Project RETAIN. The mission of Project RETAIN is to assist school districts in providing appropriate programming to individuals with mild disabilities through identification and dissemination of effective practices that keep students in school to prepare them for postsecondary employment, further education, or training.

The project is designed to *identify effective practices* that prepare students with mild disabilities for postsecondary employment and education and to reduce the number of students with mild disabilities in Florida who drop out of school. Research to identify effective practices has been conducted through:

1. Identification of district needs and concerns.
2. Development of a database reflective of dropout prevention programs across Florida.
3. Identification of effective practices in dropout prevention and criteria for measuring these practices.
4. Identification of programs that exemplify the identified effective practices.

Project RETAIN has been meeting the technical assistance needs of district personnel, families, and service providers in the replication of the identified effective practices through:

1. Inclusion of project information in each issue of ***Florida*** *Network News.*
2. Publication of a series of monographs covering identified effective practices, exemplary programs and practices, and resources for postsecondary students who are learning disabled.
3. Dissemination of resources through a resource center that provides individual technical assistance, referrals to peer consultants, and development of technical assistance information packets.
4. Sponsorship of regional training sessions highlighting identified exemplary programs and effective practices.

This monograph is the first in a series of three monographs to be disseminated by Project RETAIN. Results of this study, *The Relationship Between Dropout Prevention and Transition for Secondary School Students with Mild Disabilities*, are reported in this monograph. This consensus-building study was conducted on a national level and included participants who are professional leaders in the fields of transition, special education, and dropout prevention.

Acknowledgments

Several individuals contributed to this study and the development of this document. Their contributions were great and warrant mention. First, a special thank you is extended to the professionals across the country who gave their valuable time to participate in the study. Their responses were timely and thought provoking. Second, the contribution made by Dr. Sara Pankaskie from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students, should be recognized. Third, Drs. Beth Tulbert and David Miller provided invaluable technical assistance. Finally, Vicki Tucker and Beth Maxwell deserve recognition for their editorial and layout work.

Introduction

"We must change the way we do business in education...

because business is depending on it.

In fact, our entire economic survival is depending on it."

Betty Castor, Florida Commissioner of Education

Responding to high dropout rates and poor worker skills impacting state and national economies, many states are implementing initiatives to reform education within their jurisdictions. State initiatives driving educational change in Florida include the *Blueprint for Career Preparation* and *Blueprint 2000: A System of School Improvement and Accountability*. The *Blueprint for Career Preparation* has three goals: (a) to close the gap between job requirements and the skills of Florida's work force, (b) to prepare students to work in a global and ever-changing marketplace, and (c) to enable graduates to get a job (Florida Department of Education, 1991). *Blueprint 2000: A System of School Improvement and Accountability* focuses on developing a system for school-based management that holds schools accountable for student learning. One of the seven goals of the school improvement initiative addresses graduation rates and student readiness for further education, employment, and training (Florida Department of Education, 1992). Both of these state initiatives require schools to evaluate their programming to ensure that they keep students in school and prepare their students for the future. These two educational initiatives go beyond making students fit the system by evaluating ways that schools can change to meet the needs of the students. Such an atmosphere of change offers an opportunity to impact school programming in ways thought unrealistic only a decade ago. For example, school systems can provide flexible schedules that allow students to help support their families by working while they attend school.

One population often overlooked in educational reform includes students with mild disabilities who are at risk of exiting school without graduating. The current climate of educational reform offers the opportunity for the identification of effective practices that maintain these students in school and prepare them for work or further education. Identification of these effective practices would assist in providing schools direction for changing programming to meet the needs of this population. This report discusses a study that identified effective practices for students with mild disabilities at risk of dropping out of school. These practices were developed as a means to keep these students in school to prepare them for further education, work, and community life. The following sections focus on demographic characteristics of dropouts, reasons students give for dropping out, and dropout prevention programs. The merger of transition, special education, and dropout prevention to maintain students with special needs in school is also discussed.

Dropout Demographics

Early research in dropout prevention focused on identifying demographic characteristics of students who drop out. Socioeconomic background is one of the strongest predictors of early school withdrawal; students from low socioeconomic status homes are the most likely to drop out. Gender and ethnicity are also related factors. Males are more likely to drop out than females, and students from minority homes—especially where English is a second language—are more likely to drop out than their non-minority peers (Fine & Zane, 1989). Finally, data from *High School and Beyond* (HS&B) indicate dropouts frequently attend urban schools in the south or west (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986).

Research also indicates similarities in dropouts' school experiences, with low achievement and discipline problems being major determinants of dropping out (Ekstrom et al., 1986). Low grades, retention, and poor performance on minimum competency tests are all associated with failure to complete high school (Hahn, 1987; Kreitzer, Madaus, &

Haney, 1989). Hence, efforts to raise achievement levels in school may function to exacerbate the dropout problem by adversely affecting at-risk students in ways that push these students out of the educational system (Quinn, 1991).

The majority of dropout research has focused on dropouts from the general at-risk population while little attention has been given to students with mild disabilities who drop out. Yet statistics indicate that students with disabilities drop out at disproportionate rates, regardless of whether they are mainstreamed or in special-needs education (Butler-Nalin & Padilla, 1989; Wolman, Bruininks, & Thurlow, 1989). Furthermore, students with mild disabilities, especially learning disabilities and emotional disturbances, constitute the greatest proportion of special-needs students who drop out (Edgar, 1987; Wolman et al., 1989). Reported dropout rates for students with specific learning disabilities are almost twice the dropout rate of their nondisabled peers (deBettencourt, Zigmond, & Thornton, 1989). In Florida, reported dropout rates for students exiting school systems without diplomas or certificates of completion in 1988-89 was 78% for students with emotional handicaps, 54% for students with specific learning disabilities, and 41% for students identified as educable mentally retarded (Beech, 1991). In addition, a "dropout cycle" for students with mild disabilities has been theorized based on data which indicates that 74% of students with mild disabilities who left school return within one year, and 12% of students graduating interrupt their education at least once (Blackorby, Edgar, & Kortering, 1991).

Studies show employment ranges from 48% to 74% for individuals with mild disabilities who graduate from school. In contrast, students with mild disabilities who did not graduate experience employment rates ranging from 28% to 44% (Edgar, 1987; Zigmond & Thornton, 1985). These data indicate that maintaining individuals with mild disabilities in school until they graduate can positively affect their chances of being employed.

Reasons Students Drop Out

While research identifying common characteristics of dropouts has been helpful in identifying those most at risk of early withdrawal, more recent research has focused on the processes students go through in deciding to remove themselves from the educational system. Based on reasons students in the HS&B data set gave for early withdrawal, dropouts on the whole reported not liking school and having poor grades. Nearly one-third of the females in the study reported dropping out to get married while approximately one-fourth of the females reported dropping out because of pregnancy. Males on the other hand tended to report dropping out for economic reasons (i.e., they were offered a job or needed to help support their families), not getting along with teachers, and expulsion (Ekstrom et al., 1986). In a Florida study, some individuals with disabilities who left school without graduating indicated they dropped out of school because of general dissatisfaction and the stigma of being in special education (Florida Department of Education, 1990).

Dropout Prevention Strategies

Students matching the above profiles are targeted as being at risk of dropping out and are frequently placed in special alternative programs. These alternative programs range in the extent of their intervention. At-risk students may remain in traditional classrooms where they are monitored more closely than their peers while other programs allow students to attend special classes housed in the traditional school building. A third approach places students in a separate school with a specialized program geared to meeting the at-risk students' needs. While much research has focused on identifying characteristics common to dropouts, less attention has been given to effective strategies for retaining at-risk students to graduation. Four areas common to effective programs for students at risk of dropping out include:

1. Program organization and administration is small with high degrees of flexibility and autonomy.
2. Teachers hold to a high degree of professional accountability and efficacy while addressing the students' social as well as academic needs.
3. Students have a strong sense of belonging; strong student support structures as well as cooperative learning are common.
4. Curriculum and instruction are often individualized and experimental, frequently utilizing community components such as internships. (Wehlage, 1983)

Transition Dropout Prevention Strategies

Researchers and policy developers, searching for methods to retain students with mild disabilities in school, have begun to merge the fields of transition, special education, and dropout prevention. Preliminary research has already taken place in this attempt to merge the disciplines. One proposed model used transition to maintain students with special needs in postsecondary vocational education programs and provide a "person-environment fit" (Brown & Kayser, 1985). In another research study, a survey was distributed to directors of exemplary vocational programs to collect information on components that made their programs strong (Batsche, 1985). Data from the survey indicated that effective practices include: (a) preservice and inservice education that addresses dropout prevention, (b) curriculum activities that develop self-concept, increase motivation, and refine daily living skills, (c) vocational and academic skills that are taught in realistic settings, (d) counseling services that are available to students, (e) behavioral role models, (f) teachers who are perceived as approachable, and (g) additional research to determine possible discrepancies between teacher and student perceptions of the effective practices.

A statewide study in Florida to identify components of effective transition programs was also conducted (Rollins, 1989). The results of this study incorporate some of the same concepts as Batsche's effective practices and include: (a) interagency agreements, (b) functional curriculum, (c) individualized planning, (d) community-based training, and (e) support services.

These preliminary studies indicate a need for additional research in effective practices for transition and dropout prevention. The need for research identifying effective intervention practices for students with mild disabilities is further supported by Blackorby et al. (1991) when they suggested the differences between students with disabilities who graduate and those who drop out lie more in educational practices and environmental factors than individual differences. In addition, Wolman et al. (1989) reported a lack of systematic research in identifying effective intervention strategies for reducing the numbers of students with disabilities who drop out. Clearly, research in the area of school practices that either increase or decrease a school's holding power is needed to provide greater insight into the dropout phenomenon.

Rationale for Study

Most researchers have addressed dropout prevention for at-risk students while few have addressed dropout prevention for students with special needs, especially individuals with mild disabilities, who are dropping out of school at alarming rates (Butler-Nalin & Padilla, 1989; Wagner, 1989). Additionally, researchers have identified effective practices for facilitating the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary employment, education, and community integration (Clark & Kolstoe, 1990). Merging the research implications in special education, transition, and dropout prevention might identify effective practices that prepare students with mild disabilities for postsecondary employment and education and reduce the number of students who drop out.

The purpose of this study was to establish a consensus among experts in the fields of transition, special education, and dropout prevention regarding the relationship between dropout prevention and transition practices for youths and adults with mild disabilities. The results of this study allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the appropriateness of applying identified effective transition practices for students with mild disabilities to decrease the numbers of these students who drop out. This study sought to answer the following research question:

To what extent are effective dropout prevention and transition practices for youth with mild disabilities the same?

Methodology

Conceptualization

The consensus-building process used in this study was based on the Delphi Method, a method originally developed by Rand Corporation to effectively gather group information (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Central to the Delphi Method is the belief that a group as a whole encompasses as much or more information than any single member. This belief coincided with the conceptualization of this study—to gain a group consensus in response to the posed research question. There are three main factors associated with the Delphi procedure: (a) anonymity, (b) controlled feedback, and (c) statistical group response. Several properties of the Delphi Method made it attractive for this research project. First, it is an efficient way to gain information from a group of knowledgeable people. Second, the exercise can be highly motivating to respondents, thereby fostering novel and interesting responses. Third, the use of a systematic procedure provides objectivity to the outcomes. Finally, anonymity and group response allows a sharing of responsibility that releases the respondents from social inhibitions (Dalkey, Rourke, Lewis, & Snyder, 1972; Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

The Delphi Method has other features that made it appropriate for this study. For example, funds do not need to be spent in bringing participants together for a series of meetings, making it a cost-effective research method. In addition, questionnaires take considerably less time to complete than attending a series of meetings, making this a time-effective process for participants. This method allowed experts from across the country to participate in the study. Further, it was anticipated that providing leaders with a research question through a process that eliminated peer influence would result in responses that were preeminent and thought provoking. This study, designed for 10 panel members, was especially appropriate for the Delphi Method because the method is effective for small, medium, or large groups (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Finally, this method would allow

generation of a statistically analyzed set of agreed-upon effective practices that represent the collective opinion and knowledge of experts across the country.

Selection

Literature searches were conducted in professional journals and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) documents in transition, special education, and dropout prevention to develop a pool of participants who are experts in these areas. The searches yielded a pool of 20 experts who have recently conducted research, implemented programs, published articles, or written books addressing dropout prevention for students with special needs.

From this list, 10 experts representing a broad range of views were selected for this study's panel. Because the resulting data were to be used to identify exemplary programs within Florida, it was decided to limit the panelists to experts not currently working in Florida, thereby reducing bias. When more than one expert from a single institution was identified, the highest ranking position in that institution was selected.

Eight of the 10 experts contacted agreed to participate in the study, and this created two open slots on the panel. One of the open slots represented a major research institute and was filled by requesting a replacement from within the institute. The second slot was filled from the previously identified expert pool.

Survey Development

Round 1

Effective practices in transition and dropout prevention were identified from an initial review of literature related to dropout prevention for at-risk students and transition for students with disabilities. These practices were then merged into one list and organized into four domains: *Organization, Programming, Personnel,* and *Social.* The domains are representative of the previously mentioned four areas common to effective programs for

students at risk of dropping out (Wehlage, 1983). Finally, possible models of the relationship between transition and dropout prevention for students with special needs were proposed.

A survey based on these practices and models was developed and pilot tested. Feedback from the pilot testing indicated that the survey was too structured. Consequently, an open-ended questionnaire was developed that used only the original domains. Once the pilot test of the instrument indicated that the overall format of the open-ended questionnaire was effective, it was mailed to the 10 panelists. The panelists were directed to list at least 10 practices and implementations in each of the four domains. A fifth area, *Other*, was included to allow for as broad an array of ideas as possible. Panelists were asked to list not only effective practices but also implementations of those practices to provide clarification of the identified effective practices.

Domains

The Round 1 survey was organized into four domains: *Organization*, *Programming*, *Personnel*, and *Social*. The domains chosen were representative of the four areas common to effective programs for students at risk of dropping out (Wehlage, 1983). This data organization continued throughout the study because effective practices identified and verified by the panelists fit within the following definitions.

1. *Organization Domain:* Practices that pertain to the structure and administration of the program such as scheduling, admittance procedures, and service coordination.
2. *Programming Domain:* Practices that pertain to program development and content such as curriculum and instruction, student academic engagement, community-based training, and support services.
3. *Personnel Domain:* Practices that pertain to each professional's perception of his or her role in the program such as collaboration, accountability, and goals.

4. *Social Domain:* Practices that pertain to each student's social needs in school and at the work place such as acceptance, interactions, social engagement, student recognition, and extracurricular activities.

Round 2

Responses from Round 1 yielded 362 practices and implementations. The practices were collapsed into 186 practices based on similar content within identified domains—except for practices listed under *Other*, which were moved at the researchers' discretion into the identified four domains. To increase reliability, each researcher collapsed the data then compared the results. When disagreements occurred on collapsed items, discussion ensued until agreement was reached among the researchers. To ensure internal consistency in the Round 2 survey, the practices and implementations were edited for grammar and comparable sentence structure. After the survey was complete, an independent consultant compared the survey to the original data to ensure that information was not added or deleted from the intent of the panelists' Round 1 responses.

During Round 2, the panelists were asked to rate only the 186 identified effective practices for validity and feasibility; implementations were used to clarify or illustrate the effective practices. Ratings in each area were done on five-point Likert scales, and the ratings were based on the validity and feasibility definitions provided in the Round 2 mailing (see Table 1, page 13). The validity and feasibility definitions were modified according to previous Delphi studies (Jillson, 1975). Although the previous studies were not conducted in the field of education, it was felt that the definitions and rating scales were generic and would be applicable to education with limited modification. Since this study, a published educational study further supports using these rating scales (Feichtner, Apolloni, & Olivier, 1992).

Table 1

Validity and Feasibility Likert Scales

VALIDITY

Scale Reference	Definition
1. Definitely Valid	• A most effective transition and dropout prevention practice. • A most relevant point. • Has direct bearing on major issues and concerns. • Must be addressed.
2. Probably Valid	• Somewhat effective transition and dropout prevention practice. • Is relevant to issues and concerns. • Significant impact but not until other items are treated. • Does not have to be fully addressed.
3. May or May Not Be Valid	• Undetermined effectiveness for transition and dropout prevention. • May be relevant to the issues and concerns. • May have impact. • May be a determining factor to issues.
4. Probably Invalid	• Probably ineffective transition and dropout prevention practice. • Insignificantly relevant. • Has little impact. • Not a determining factor to issues.
5. Definitely Invalid	• Not an effective transition and dropout prevention practice. • No relevance. • No measurable impact. • Should be dropped as an item to consider.

FEASIBILITY

Scale Reference	Definition
1. Definitely Feasible	• Can be implemented. • Definitely within available resources. • Necessary structures are in place. • No major political roadblocks. • Will be acceptable to the general public. • Benefits will far outweigh costs.
2. Probably Feasible	• Some indication this can be implemented. • Available resources would have to be supplemented. • Existing structures need to be expanded or adopted. • Some political roadblocks. • Some indications this will be acceptable to the general public. • Benefits greater than costs.
3. May or May Not Be Feasible	• Contradictory evidence this can be implemented. • Increase in available resources would be needed. • Existing structures may be inadequate. • Political roadblocks. • Some indications this may not be acceptable to the general public. • Benefits equal costs.
4. Probably Infeasible	• Some indication this cannot be implemented. • Large-scale increase in available resources would be needed. • Existing structures are inadequate. • Major political roadblocks. • Not acceptable to a large proportion of the general public. • Costs greater than benefits.
5. Definitely Infeasible	• Cannot be implemented (unworkable). • Unprecedented allocation of resources would be needed. • No existing structures exist. • Politically unacceptable. • Completely unacceptable to the general public. • Costs far outweigh benefits.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel 4.0 on a Macintosh IIsi System. Statistical analysis of the data yielded percentage of response for each item on the Likert scale, mode, and range for both validity and feasibility (Goldstein, 1975; Jillson, 1975). Because the purpose of the study was to gain consensus on effective practices for dropout prevention and transition for students with mild disabilities, the term consensus needed to be operationalized. Consensus was defined to include the combination rating of numbers 1 and 2—for each scale—that was greater than 60%. Consensus was gained on this validity scale on 180 practices. Of these 180 practices, 124 practices were rated as feasible. These effective practices were then rank ordered based on the percentages.

Organization of Data

Round 3

To organize the 180 identified effective practices into a usable format, practices were placed into themes. The same method used in Round 2 to collapse data was used in Round 3. Practices were placed into themes based on similar content within identified themes. The themes were identified by the researchers based on a literature review and common trends that emerged under each domain. Each of the four domains—organization, programming, personnel, and social—contained common and unique themes. To increase reliability, each researcher organized data into themes and then compared the results. When disagreements on the organization of items occurred, discussion ensued until agreement was reached among the researchers. To ensure internal consistency in the Round 3 survey, an independent consultant reviewed the organization of practices under the themes within each domain.

During Round 3, the panelists were asked to indicate their agreement on the placement of the practices under the themes within each domain. Placement verification of practices under themes was indicated through a survey sent to the panelists that asked them

to agree or disagree with the placement of the practices. If a panelist did not agree with the placement, he or she was asked to indicate a more appropriate placement for the practice.

The panelists responding to Round 3 rated practices as correctly or not correctly placed under a theme. Practices were considered as not being placed under the correct theme within a domain if 60% of the panelists indicated disagreement with placement. The results of Round 3 indicate that 100% of the practices were placed under the correct theme. The return rate of 70% on Round 3 was lower than the other two rounds. This may have been due to the time that lapsed between Rounds 2 and 3. Because consensus was achieved in Round 2, this return rate does not affect the rating of the effective practices.

Themes

Practices were placed into 10 themes based on similar content. This data organization was necessary to show common trends within and across the domains. These common themes make the data more usable for program assessment and incorporation of practices into programs. The following list itemizes the themes and their definitions as well as specific content areas.

1. *Climate*

   Definition: Practices that affect the atmosphere in which students learn.

   Content: Administration, school vision, individual student needs, cultural acceptance, professional growth, normative environment, high expectations, belief in success, rules and performance standards, accountability, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, school community, and peer collaboration.

2. *Collaboration*

   Definition: Practices that focus on partnerships as part of service delivery.

   Content: Interdepartmental collaboration, interagency collaboration, formal collaboration agreements, relationship with community, family and student participation, shared responsibility, articulated support services, and coursework.

3. *Evaluation/Development*

   Definition: Practices that address program improvement.

   Content: Program evaluation and student monitoring.

4. *Individualization*

   Definition: Practices that center on the individual needs of the student.

   Content: Personnel, parents, and students involved in IEP development; transition and dropout prevention; planning as part of the IEP; social issues addressed in the IEP; future and career planning; case management; and assessment offered.

5. *Program Friendliness*

   Definition: Practices that focus on methods to ensure programs meet the needs of students and are easy for students to access.

   Content: Admittance and re-admittance flexibility, support services, help for problems on demand, alternative programs, pregnant and parenting teens programs, active recruitment and outreach, policies to attract former students, equitable access to services and programs, flexible scheduling, peer support and recognition, social network of friends still in school, and sense of acceptance and belonging.

6. *Services*

   Definition: Practices that address support services needed to maintain students in school.

Content: Youth advocacy, role models, mentors, embedded career services, wrap-around family support, comprehensive array of services, services to master course content, guidance and counseling, small group counseling, and on-site child care.

7. *Instruction and Curriculum*

   Definition: Practices that address components of teaching and impact curriculum design.

   Content: Empowerment of students, interrelated educational and vocational goals, flexibility and ability to adapt, interpersonal skills, community life, social skills, community-based training, sequence of learning, multiple instructional approaches, individualization and modification, relationship between work and life, and training and paid employment.

8. *Student Objectives*

   Definition: Practices that focus on the skills and qualities of students.

   Content: Conflict management, problem solving, goal setting, personal understanding of disability, self advocacy and referral, recreation and leisure skills, team building, school survival skills, accepting criticism and managing authority figures, safety skills, volunteerism, responsibility, study skills, basic skills instruction, and skill transfer.

9. *Staff Qualifications*

   Definition: Practices that focus on the skills and responsibilities of personnel who provide services to students.

   Content: Formative and summative accountability, job development, flexible service and instruction response, conflict resolution, users of research, behavior management, and success-oriented curriculum design.

10. *Training*

Definition: Practices that address the provision of preservice and inservice programs.

Content: Institution-wide personnel development plan; opportunities for educators and personnel from business, industry, and agencies are provided to observe and switch roles; and new personnel orientation and current personnel update .

NOTE: A copy of the instruments for Rounds 1, 2, and 3 are available upon request from the *Florida* Network.

Results and Implications

Rounds 1 and 2 yielded return rates of 100%; the responses were returned within a month from mailing the questionnaires. Six of the 10 panelists indicated that this was a difficult but worthwhile and thought-provoking process. In Round 2, 100% of the panelists rated 186 items except for one item that one panelist neglected to rate. Only one panelist indicated that the researchers misinterpreted a response from Round 1. Although this item was rated by all panelists during Round 2, it was not used in the final data analysis. The high level of agreement on the Round 2 data indicated that the panelists reached consensus on 180 items. Round 3 yielded a 70% return rate. Data from Round 3 indicated that the 180 identified practices were placed into the appropriate themes.

The top six themes of the 180 effective practices across all the domains were Climate (26%), Collaboration (13%), Student Objectives (12%), Services (12%), Instruction and Curriculum (12%), and Program Friendliness (11%) (see Table 2, page 20). Eighty-six percent of the 180 effective dropout/transition practices generated by the panel address these six themes. This rating seems to be supported by both dropout prevention and transition effective practices listed in the literature such as administrative support, interdepartmental and interagency collaboration, availability of support services, functional curriculum, and addressing the student's individual social and academic needs (Batsche, 1985; Rollins, 1989; Wehlage, 1983).

Table 2

Effective Practices by Themes and Domains

Themes	Organization	Programming	Personnel	Social	TOTAL
Climate	11	10	13	12	46
Collaboration	9	6	9	0	24
Evaluation/ Development	2	0	0	0	2
Individualization	3	5	1	0	9
Program Friendliness	9	4	0	7	20
Services	8	6	0	7	21
Instruction and Curriculum	0	11	0	10	21
Student Objectives	0	4	0	18	22
Staff Qualifications	0	0	10	0	10
Training	0	0	5	0	5
TOTAL	42	46	38	54	180

Validity

The validity Likert scale offered the panelists five possible ratings with a rating of 1 being the most valid and 5 the least valid (see Table 1, page 13). Validity factors rated included: (a) effectiveness of practice, (b) relevance to issues and concerns, (c) level of impact on issues and concerns, and (d) level of need to address. Practices were considered valid if 60% or more of the panelists rated the practices with a 1 or 2 on the validity scale. Ninety-seven percent of the 186 practices included in Round 2 were rated as valid by the panel.

Domains

Discussion of the following domains is based on Round 2 data because consensus of identified practices was gained during Round 2. Therefore, these results are based on the 186 practices rated on the Round 2 questionnaire.

Organization Domain

The respondents were almost unanimous in thinking that the listed Organization Domain effective practices were valid. Ninety-five percent of the original 44 items were scored as being valid based on the definition of consensus used in this study (see Table 3, page 22). The Organization Domain effective practices fall into six themes including: (a) Climate, (b) Collaboration, (c) Evaluation/Development, (d) Individualization, (e) Program Friendliness, and (f) Services. The Evaluation/Development theme is unique to the Organization Domain, a logical place because this centers on practices impacting school structure and organization. Effective practices in this domain focus on involving administrators, providing student-centered services, evaluating programs, setting a positive school climate, establishing interdepartmental collaboration, coordinating interagency collaboration, encouraging community involvement, supporting youth advocacy, formalizing case management, facilitating program re-entry, and providing support. These practices offer a structure to support students and personnel as well as the programs developed for students with mild disabilities.

Table 3

Organization Domain Effective Practices Under Themes

ORGANIZATION DOMAIN: Practices that pertain to the structure and administration of the program such as scheduling, admittance procedures, and service coordination.

Climate. Effective practices that affect the atmosphere in which students learn.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Administrators are involved in transition efforts with instructors, demonstrating the concept of transition as an integral part of the district vision. Transition as an issue, far larger than just students with disabilities, is recognized.	90	70
Program structure is based on a system of student-centered services with student needs guiding the type and mix of services provided.	100	80
Program is responsive to cultural factors that impact students and incorporate multicultural education practices as an integral part of the curriculum.	100	60
Institutional policies focus on student retention for all - - not dropout prevention or reclamation.	80	40
School and classroom climate are positive.	100	80
Priorities for allocating state and federal vocational education funds are set.	60	60
Research findings and exemplary transition program models are used in program development.	90	60
High student expectations are established.	80	60
Teachers, staff, and service providers are encouraged to attend inservice programs and college classes.	80	50
All students are taught in heterogeneous groupings.	70	20
Students receive service in the most normative environment that is appropriate.	100	100

Collaboration. Effective practices that focus on partnerships as part of service delivery.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Interdepartmental collaboration exists among general education, special education, and vocational education to ensure support for school-to-work or postsecondary transition.	100	60
Support services are coordinated through interagency collaboration.	100	60
Formal collaborative agreements exist among service providers, parents, and school personnel, encouraging ongoing communication with mechanisms for referral, planning, developing, coordinating, and analyzing effectiveness of support services.	100	70
Schools and area businesses collaborate to place students in cooperative programs that assist students to gain employability skills and understanding of all aspects of the industry. This collaboration allows students, teachers, and support staff to become familiar with the world of work and build closer ties to business and industry.	100	50
School policies and formalized agreements with employers limit the number of hours students can work and provide a formalized system of offering school credit for supervised work experience.	100	70
Schools have a positive relationship with the community.	90	90
The community is involved in transition processes and inclusion activities.	100	80
The families and/or surrogate families are full participants in transition planning, implementation, and evaluation.	90	60
Parents and students are active participants in setting school policy, rules, and structure.	80	30

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 3
Organization Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Evaluation/Development. Effective practices that address program improvement.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Program evaluation, local needs assessment, and student follow-up data are integral parts of the program design, providing feedback that keeps programs and staff continually changing to better serve students.	100	80
Formalized process of reviewing students outcome indicators for at-risk student identification and monitoring through systemic data review is used.	100	70

Individualization. Effective practices that center on the individual needs of the student.	Validity %	Feasibility %
A formalized process of case management for at-risk students is implemented.	100	40
Student assessment is provided to all students entering vocational programs.	80	70
By the age of 16 (younger if appropriate), all students with disabilities receive services guided by the transition planning as part of the IEP in accordance with their unique needs and potential.	100	90

Program Friendliness. Effective practices that focus on methods to ensure programs meet the needs of students and are easy for students to access.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Flexibility in admittance and re-admittance to programs exists.	80	60
School organizations facilitate re-entry of dropouts with support services to keep them in school.	100	30
Alternative programs welcome dropouts and transition them to return to school, more training, or GED/career training.	90	50
Pregnant and parenting teens feel welcome in schools and have programs to serve them.	100	50
Implementation of an active recruitment/outreach program in vocational education for students with disabilities that reflects available support services and program access.	90	70
Institution-wide student intake processes for all entering students with equitable access to all courses and programs.	90	40
Students are not locked into tracks and have multiple curricula options in high school allowing them to stretch beyond stereotypes.	90	40
Students are taught in career paths, academics, or integrated vocational programs.	90	50
The school has a flexible schedule designed to meet student needs.	90	30

Services. Effective practices that address support services needed to maintain students in school.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Youth advocacy is supported.	100	70
Embedded career services allow for early intervention.	80	40
Role models for youth are provided.	90	40
Social skills instruction and pro-social out-of-school services are provided.	80	50
Students have access to a comprehensive array of services that address transition options, educational, social, emotional, and physical needs.	90	50
Support services are available to assist all students to stay in school and transition students to post-school employment, education, or military service.	100	40
Wrap-around family support system provides referrals and access to families that need health, housing, vocational, and mental health services.	100	40
Resource assistance is available as part of the service provision design.	90	40

Programming Domain

The panelists agreed that 96% of the Programming Domain effective practices were valid (see Table 4, page 25). The two themes unique to the Programming and Social domains are Instruction and Curriculum and Student Objectives. This is not surprising in domains that address effective practices related to providing programming to students with mild disabilities to maintain them in the school setting. Practices that were rated as effective in the Programming Domain center on establishing and communicating performance standards; focusing on student strengths; sharing responsibility for programming; integrating academics, vocational experiences and support services; using multiple instructional approaches; offering flexible scheduling; focusing on social skills development; and teaching students to learn how to learn. These are practices that teachers, curriculum specialists, and other personnel can infuse into the curriculum to impact students.

Personnel Domain

Ninety-five percent of the effective practices in the Personnel Domain were rated as valid by the panelists (see Table 5, page 28). This domain has two unique themes: Staff Qualifications and Training. The Personnel Domain relates to the roles professionals play in the provision of services to students with mild disabilities at risk of dropping out. Therefore, it is appropriate that these two themes centering on personnel preparation and needed skills are listed in the Personnel Domain. Practices that the panelists rated as effective under the Personnel Domain include mentoring and counseling students, developing student rapport and trust, taking responsibility for student outcomes, sharing information with colleagues, practicing effective team building, developing individualized education plans (IEPs), using curriculum modification strategies, and establishing staff development programs. These are skills that personnel need to possess and use when working with students.

Table 4

Programming Domain Effective Practices Under Themes

PROGRAMMING DOMAIN: Practices that pertain to program development and content such as curriculum and instruction, student academic engagement, community-based training, and support services.

Climate. Effective practices that affect the atmosphere in which students learn.	Validity %	Feasibility %
There is a focus on students' and staff's transition rights and responsibilities.	70	70
Program focus is success-oriented and geared toward the strengths of the student.	100	70
Academic engagement of youth is promoted.	80	70
Community-based instruction is valued and implemented.	90	80
Rules and performance standards are established and clearly communicated.	90	80
Daily attendance is encouraged.	90	100
Inservice is an integral component of programming and offers institution-wide staff development efforts focused on accommodations and an analysis of how accommodations impact support services.	80	80
School curriculum provides realistic education and training.	90	80
Students are placed in the most integrated programs possible and receive assistance in order to be successful.	80	70
Encourage a strong system of peer collaboration as a means of increasing support and engagement.	80	60

Collaboration. Effective practices that focus on partnerships as part of service delivery.	Validity %	Feasibility %
High school courses are interrelated and not compartmentalized.	70	80
An institution-wide system of articulated support services are coordinated and integrated with academic and vocational experiences.	90	70
Shared responsibility for programming, evaluation, and accountability exists.	90	60
School-community collaboration exists.	100	70
Parental participation is encouraged.	90	60
Integrate academic skills into vocational programs and vocational skills into academic programs.	80	70

Individualization. Effective practices that center on the individual needs of the student.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Parent and youth are involved in IEP and transition planning.	90	90
Dropout prevention is addressed by a formalized process within the context of the student's IEP.	60	90
An established process for implementing future planning through natural supports and utilization of key people in the community is in place.	70	40
There is an assessment program for all students that does not restrict students, but enables students to know themselves.	80	90
Beginning in junior high, a career development and transition planning process involving special education teachers, vocational education instructors, and school guidance counselors is implemented so that students are actively engaged in seeking employment in their field of training.	80	80

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 4
Programming Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Program Friendliness. Effective practices that focus on methods to ensure programs meet the needs of students and are easy for students to access.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Policies and practices to attract former students are formulated.	90	40
Flexible scheduling of classes is offered to accommodate students needing to work part-time or who have child care responsibilities while attending school.	60	50
A formal process for re-entry of students who have already dropped out is established.	100	80
Alternative programs of study are provided with multiple curricula options for all students.	80	60

Services. Effective practices that address support services needed to maintain students in school.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Academic support including study skills, accelerated remediation, and instructional support staff in vocational classes assists students in mastering content.	100	60
Students have access to guidance and counseling including certified career guidance personnel to assist them in career choices.	90	90
Regularly scheduled small group counseling (10-12 both with and without disabilities) are offered as a means of addressing employment, post-secondary training, social and personal issues, and other issues and concerns as appropriate.	100	40
A formalized mentorship program for at-risk youth is in place.	90	60
Provide on-site child care services.	100	60
Offer health services, alcohol/drug rehabilitation, and mental health counseling.	100	30

Instruction and Curriculum. Effective practices that address components of teaching and impact curriculum design.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Participation in cooperative education (formal co-op associated with vocational education program) and community-based training in all occupational areas are offered to students.	100	80
A sequence of learning is defined and communicated.	90	90
Methods are appropriate for the tasks taught.	100	100
Diversify learning activities to address all types of learners.	100	80
Existing curriculum to increase opportunities for self-advocacy and self-determination is reviewed.	70	60
Multiple instructional approaches are available as options for teachers.	100	70
Modify environment, materials, teaching techniques, and evaluation procedures.	90	70
Workable, relevant programs (both vocational and academic) are offered to all students.	90	60
Students have opportunities in all classes to understand work and its relationship to their lives.	100	50
Provide specific skills training and paid employment opportunities during the secondary years.	100	50
Insure access to coherent, sequenced, high-quality vocational education programs in occupations with good employment and career advancement potential.	100	50

Table 4
Programming Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Student Objectives. Effective practices that focus on the skills and qualities of students.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Provide basic skills instruction.	80	80
Focus on social-skills development and citizenship skills.	80	70
Students learn how to learn and transfer skills.	90	50
School survival skills are taught.	80	70

Table 5

Personnel Domain Effective Practices Under Themes

PERSONNEL DOMAIN: Practices that pertain to each professional's perception of his or her role in the program such as collaboration, accountability, and goals.

Climate. Effective practices that affect the atmosphere in which students learn.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Personnel are responsive to cultural factors which have an impact on the student.	90	60
Individuals are committed to quality of life issues.	80	50
Individuals are committed to change our political/economic system - justice for all.	80	20
Individuals are committed to taking care of themselves.	70	40
The role of guidance counselors is re-conceptualized to address the needs of at-risk youth.	80	40
Teachers value academic goals and believe students can obtain literacy.	90	70
Teachers have enthusiasm and total commitment to students; they believe their students can succeed.	100	50
Teachers mentor and counsel students.	100	70
Teachers have the ability to develop rapport with and trust of students and families.	100	70
Professionals value a variety of perspectives on instructional and transition issues.	80	60
Staff is held accountable for establishing a positive school climate and student engagement.	80	60
Individual teachers and administrators are accountable and responsible for student outcomes.	100	50
Professionals are committed to community accommodations.	80	30

Collaboration. Effective practices that focus on partnerships as part of service delivery.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Personnel share information.	100	60
Collaborative efforts between educators and teacher educators are encouraged.	70	60
Personnel practice effective teamwork and team building.	100	70
Personnel recognize the concept of shared responsibility with other service providers, monitoring services provided and supplying feedback to case management team.	80	60
Personnel assume responsibility for becoming actively involved in and creating linkages with community and businesses.	90	50
Parents are trained in supporting students' vocational education programs.	90	30
Training in effective parenting is provided.	90	50
Personnel are interdisciplinary and interagency collaborators.	90	50
Academic and vocational education is integrated.	80	60

Individualization. Effective practices that center on the individual needs of the student.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Personnel have a role in development of ITPs/IEPs.	80	60

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 5
Personnel Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Staff Qualifications. Effective practices that focus on the skills and responsibilities of personnel who provide services to students.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Personnel have formative and summative accountability skills.	70	40
Personnel are skilled in job development, program development, and program marketing.	100	70
Personnel are capable of flexible service responses.	90	30
Teachers are competent in a number of instructional approaches; they are creative and willing to try new techniques.	100	50
Personnel are aware of and use appropriate curriculum modification strategies.	100	60
Professionals are able to monitor progress and make changes or proactively find support.	90	60
Personnel are conflict resolution specialists.	80	50
Teachers are active users of research.	70	30
Personnel are behavior management specialists.	80	60
Personnel are success-oriented curriculum designers.	80	50

Training. Effective practices that address the provision of preservice and inservice programs.	Validity %	Feasibility %
An institution-wide, long-term plan is developed to provide staff development strategies and services.	100	80
All staff members, including new personnel, are provided training in district priorities, traits of special need learners, identification of at-risk youth, and development and implementation of transition programs.	80	90
All staff members' abilities to educationally accommodate a wider range of students within vocational programs are enhanced through instructional training and support for vocational instructors in working with students with disabilities, special education teachers, and staff.	90	70
Educators and personnel from business, industry, and agencies are provided opportunities to observe or switch roles.	70	40
Professional development is used to update training.	100	80

Social Domain

One hundred percent of the Social Domain effective practices listed were rated as valid by the panelists (see Table 6, page 31). Two themes not represented in the Social Domain were Collaboration and Individualization. Practices centering on peer collaboration were more appropriately placed in the Program Friendliness theme. However, it is interesting to note that intra/interagency collaboration was not represented in the Social Domain as were practices related to student services. The nonrepresentation of the Individualization theme is perhaps due to the domain's focus on the social needs of students in school and in the work setting. Effective practices in the Social Domain include participating in all facets of the school community, receiving leadership and social skills training, learning interpersonal skills, developing social networks, and obtaining a full array of needed support services. These practices are student centered and directly related to student support and skill building.

Feasibility

The feasibility Likert scale offered the panelists five possible ratings with a rating of 1 being the most feasible and 5 the least feasible (see Table 1, page 13). Feasibility factors rated include: (a) ease of implementation, (b) resource availability, (c) structure existence, (d) level of political roadblocks, (e) acceptance to the general public, and (f) cost benefits. Practices were considered feasible if 60% or more of the panelists rated the practices with a 1 or 2 on the feasibility scale (see Table 7, page 34). Sixty-nine percent of the 180 practices identified as valid were rated as feasible by the panel.

Although consensus seemed to exist on the validity of the effective practices, the panelists did not reach as strong an agreement on the feasibility of implementing the practices. Only 53% of the practices in the Organization Domain were scored as feasible, whereas 95% were rated as valid (see Table 3, page 22). The panelists agreed that 96% of

Table 6

Social Domain Effective Practices Under Themes

SOCIAL DOMAIN: Practices that pertain to each student's social needs in school and at the work place such as acceptance, interactions, social engagement, student recognition, and extracurricular activities.

Climate. Effective practices that affect the atmosphere in which students learn.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of student is considered.	90	80
Students are provided opportunities to learn and demonstrate leadership skills in positive and contributive ways.	90	70
Confidence and self-esteem are fostered.	100	80
Youth leadership training series, offered during the school year and over summer months, build a sense of empowerment.	80	50
Numerous recognition programs honor student successes.	90	60
Students are taught sensitivity and acceptance of cultural differences.	80	60
Youth are encouraged to participate in all facets of the school community including sports, music, extracurricular activities, and scholarly activities.	100	60
Noncompetitive extracurricular pursuits that foster team work are provided.	100	70
Some of the school day (once a week, biweekly, etc.) is set aside for extracurricular activities.	70	60
Institutional corporate culture accommodates learners with special needs and their educational and support services "rights."	100	80
Willingness and expectations with an award structure exists for all staff to work as team members to address students' needs.	100	70
There are ample opportunities for special needs students to interact socially with all students.	90	60

Program Friendliness. Effective practices that focus on methods to ensure programs meet the needs of students and are easy for students to access.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Peer support and recognition is fostered.	80	50
Students in work programs are considered when scheduling programs, assemblies, etc.	100	60
Students are encouraged to develop a social network of friends who are still in school.	80	40
Students' sense of acceptance and belonging in school, work, and extracurricular activities is fostered.	80	50
Social acceptance/peer acceptance is encouraged.	60	60
Acceptance in the work place is fostered.	70	60
Youth can receive help for problems on demand.	80	60

Services. Effective practices that address support services needed to maintain students in school.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Scholarship programs are available for at-risk youth.	90	60
A confidant is provided by instituting programs, such as mentoring, in order to connect youth with caring adults or other students.	80	70
Students are offered summer events which serve to engage youth in community assistance projects.	100	80

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 6
Social Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Services (continued). Effective practices that address support services needed to maintain students in school.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Students are provided financial assistance.	80	60
Students are provided ongoing social support.	80	90
Personal/ family counseling and guidance programs exist for special groups (e.g., divorced parents, study problems, health issues).	100	80
General student information is available.	90	70

Instruction and Curriculum. Effective practices that address components of teaching and impact curriculum design.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Training programs empower students to believe that training can and will help them prepare for the work place and make the transition to the world outside of school.	80	60
Students' educational goals are related to vocational programs.	90	70
Vocational student organizations (VSOs) are open to all.	80	60
Flexibility and ability to adapt to change is fostered within students.	80	80
Students are provided interpersonal skills development needed for community living and successful employment.	100	70
Participation in and awareness of community life is encouraged.	90	70
Social issues are addressed within IEPs at or before middle school and beyond.	60	70
Social skills are an integral part of the curriculum.	90	60
An awareness of the importance of social skills for students with disabilities is created.	90	70
An awareness is created among all teachers that instructional strategies (e.g., modeling, feedback, reinforcement) for social skills are similar to those for academics.	60	90

Student Objectives. Effective practices that focus on the skills and qualities of students.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Students are taught conflict management skills.	100	80
Students are taught problem-solving skills.	100	70
Students are taught goal setting.	100	60
Students are taught personal understanding of disability.	90	40
Students are taught self advocacy.	90	40
Students are taught self-referral skills.	80	80
Students are taught recreation and leisure skills.	70	60
Students are taught team building skills.	90	40
Students are taught to ask/answer questions in class.	100	70
Students are taught to behave appropriately in class.	100	80
Students are taught to comply with teacher requests.	100	80
Students are taught to handle criticism (whether correctly applied or falsely accused).	80	60
Students are taught to manage authority figures (principal, security guards, etc.).	80	70
Students are taught safety skills.	90	70
Students are taught volunteerism.	70	60

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 6
Social Domain Effective Practices Under Themes (continued)

Student Objectives (continued). Effective practices that focus on the skills and qualities of students.	Validity %	Feasibility %
Student are taught responsibility.	80	40
Students are provided leisure training.	100	30
Students are provided study skills development.	100	60

the Programming Domain effective practices were valid and 79% were feasible (see Table 4, page 25). Ninety-five percent of the effective practices in the Personnel Domain were rated as valid by the panelists, whereas only 50% of the practices were rated as feasible (see Table 5, page 28). One hundred percent of the Social Domain effective practices listed were rated as valid by the panelists, and 83% were rated as feasible (see Table 6, page 31).

Table 7

Percentage of Effective Practices by Theme and Domain Rated as Feasible

Themes	N	n	Organization	n	Programming	n	Personnel	n	Social
Climate	46	11	73%	10	100%	13	46%	12	92%
Collaboration	24	9	78%	6	100%	9	56%	0	----
Evaluation/ Development	2	2	100%	0	—	0	—	0	—
Individualization	9	3	67%	5	80%	1	100%	0	----
Program Friendliness	20	9	22%	4	50%	0	—	7	57%
Services	21	8	13%	6	67%	0	—	7	100%
Instruction and Curriculum	21	0	----	11	73%	0	----	10	100%
Student Objectives	22	0	----	4	75%	0	----	18	72%
Staff Qualifications	10	0	----	0	—	10	67%	0	----
Training	5	0	----	0	—	5	80%	0	----
TOTAL	180	42		46		38		54	

N=total number of effective practices under theme
n=total number of effective practices under theme in each domain

Least Feasible

Themes with 60% or more of the effective practices rated as **not** feasible by 60% or more of the panelists include: (a) Organization Domain—Program Friendliness and Services, (b) Programming Domain—Program Friendliness, (c) Personnel Domain—Climate and Collaboration, and (d) Social Domain—Program Friendliness. In all domains, 60% or less of the identified Program Friendliness effective practices were rated as feasible. This pattern of rating Program Friendliness seems to indicate that these practices

are valid and important but difficult to implement. Effective practices under this theme address areas such as re-entering into programs, flexible scheduling to meet the individual needs of students, and fostering a sense of acceptance and belonging. The identified effective practices under the themes of Climate and Collaboration in the Personnel Domain were also rated as valid but not feasible by 60% or more of the panelists. These practices address two main areas: (a) teachers' commitment to change regarding themselves, the community, collaboration, and students, and (b) teacher accountability for student outcomes. Effective practices addressing Climate and Collaboration are perhaps easily implemented in other domains not dealing with personnel concerns. Effective practices dealing with personnel issues are perhaps more difficult to mandate and evaluate.

Most Feasible

Practices that 100% of the panelists rated as being feasible are included under: (a) Programming Domain—Climate, (b) Social Domain—Climate, (c) Programming Domain—Collaboration, (d) Organization Domain—Evaluation and Development, (e) Personnel Domain-Individualization, (f) Social Domain—Services, and (g) Social Domain—Instruction and Curriculum. Effective practices listed under these themes center on providing students with opportunities to interact with other students and to achieve success. Additionally, these themes address setting high student expectations, providing extracurricular activities, offering students realistic education and training, and fostering interdiscipline and interdepartmental collaboration.

The difference between the least and most feasible practices seems to be that of controllable and noncontrollable factors. The least feasible practices center on attributes that teachers and students should possess or that the school system should assist them in acquiring. However, these practices may carry with them political roadblocks and may not be within the school systems' available resources to offer. An example is teacher

accountability for student outcomes. This is a valid practice but difficult to monitor and politically unpopular with some teachers and administrators.

Conversely, the most feasible practices are those that the school system can offer to foster skill acquisition. For example, setting high student expectations can be implemented with existing school resources and is acceptable to the general public. This may indicate that the panelists were differentiating between those practices that school systems can offer and those practices that are valid but that systems can only hope to foster. Program re-entry and schedule flexibility are exceptions to this conclusion. An explanation for the rating of least feasible given is that these practices may be difficult to implement within existing school structures.

Summary

Based on the results of this study, programs designed to prevent students with mild disabilities from dropping out and prepare them for community life seem to have some common components. These common components suggest that good programs are realistic, student-centered, and flexible; provide wrap-around services; set limitations for which students and personnel are accountable; tie into real world demands; offer a place where students feel they belong and are wanted; encourage professional development; provide supportive administrators; foster intra- and interagency collaboration and cooperation; and view students holistically.

The panelists quickly reached consensus on practices that they considered effective. Based on their reading and research, they indicated they were confident that a set of common effective practices existed. Interestingly, the panelists were also able to come to consensus readily on practices that were valid but not feasible. The pattern of practices considered as not feasible suggests that the panelists were pessimistic that school systems would be able implement the practices that were considered valid. This pessimism centered on practices that involved personal belief systems, changes in personnel, and large-scale school system changes. Therefore, the panelists' low feasibility ratings in some areas may have been reflective of the reality of the difficulty systems will have in implementing and monitoring the incorporation of the practices into programs.

The word "change" has almost become synonymous with the American school system. This change is a reaction to the changing needs of students and society. Students with mild disabilities have many opportunities available to them in the work place, but they also have obstacles to overcome so that they can receive the training needed to take advantage of these opportunities. As school systems change to accommodate and provide for the growing diversity in the school population, the timing is right to incorporate these identified effective practices. These practices need to be considered and further researched

as systems restructure their administrations, programming, personnel expectations, and student outcomes.

Further research is planned through Project RETAIN to assist school systems to incorporate these practices into their programs. This research will identify current programs that are incorporating these effective practices in their programs to serve as models for replication. A second monograph will be written describing these programs. In addition, training is scheduled to share these practices and provide program examples for replication.

References

Batsche, C. (1985). Indicators of effective programming: Examining the school to work transition for dropouts. *The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 7* (3), 27-30, 34.

Beech, M. C. (1991). *Increasing numbers of graduates: Profiles of successful exceptional student education programs in Florida* (Focus on Outcomes Document No. 5). Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students.

Blackorby, J., Edgar, E., & Kortering, L. J. (1991). A third of our youth? A look at the problem of high school drop out among students with mild handicaps. *The Journal of Special Education, 25* (1), 102-113.

Brown, J. M., & Kayser, T. F. (1985). A proposed model for reducing dropout rates among special needs students in postsecondary vocational education programs. *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education, 22* (4), 38-45.

Butler-Nalin, P., & Padilla, C. (1989, March). *Dropouts: The relationship of student characteristics, behaviors, and performance for special education students.* Paper prepared for presentation at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Clark, G. M., & Kolstoe, O. P. (1990). *Career development and transition education for adolescents with disabilities.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Dalkey, N. C., Rourke, D. L., Lewis, R., & Snyder, D. (1972). *Studies in the quality of life: Delphi and decision-making.* Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Fine, M., & Zane, N. (1989). Bein' wrapped too tight: When low-income women drop out of high school. In L. Weis, E. Farrar, & H. G. Petrie (Eds.), *Dropouts from school: Issues, dilemmas, and solutions* (pp. 23-53). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

deBettencourt, L. U., Zigmond, N., & Thornton, H. (1989). Follow-up of post secondary-age rural learning disabled graduates and dropouts. *Exceptional Children, 56* (1), 40-49.

Ekstrom, R. B., Goertz, M. E., Pollack, J. M., & Rock, D. A. (1986). Who drops out of high school and why? Findings from a national study. *Teachers College Record, 87* (3), 356-373.

Edgar, E. (1987). Secondary programs in special education: Are many of them justifiable? *Exceptional Children, 53* (6), 555-561.

Feichtner, S., Apolloni, T., & Olivier, P. (1992). Designing local plans for special populations: Targeting local programs based on labor market conditions. *The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 14* (2&3), 46-53.

Florida Department of Education. (1990). *Comparisons of graduates and non-graduates of programs for students with handicaps in two Florida school districts* (Focus on Outcomes Document No. 3). Tallahassee, FL: Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students.

Florida Department of Education. (1991). *Blueprint for career preparation*. Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Florida Department of Education. (1992). *Blueprint 2000: A system of school improvement and accountability*. Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Goldstein, N. H. (1975). A Delphi on the future of the steel and ferroalloy industries. In H. A. Linstone & M. Turoff (Eds.), *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications* (pp. 210-226). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Hahn, A. (1987). Reaching out to America's dropouts: What to do? *Phi Delta Kappan, 69*, 256-263.

Jillson, I. A. (1975). The national drug-abuse policy Delphi: Progress report and findings to date. In H. A. Linstone & M. Turoff (Eds.), *The Delphi method:*

Techniques and applications (pp. 124-159). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Kreitzer, A. E., Madaus, E. F., & Haney, W. (1989). Competency testing and dropouts. In L. Weis, E. Farrar, & H. G. Petrie (Eds.), *Dropouts from school: Issues, dilemmas, and solutions* (pp. 153-177). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. (Eds.). (1975). *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Quinn, T. (1991). The influence of school policies and practices on dropout rate. *NASSP Bulletin, 75* (538), 73-83.

Rollins, J. (1989). *Three years of transition for Florida's exceptional students.* Tallahassee, FL: Project Transition.

Wagner, M. (1989). *The transition experiences of youth with disabilities: A report from the national longitudinal transition study*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Wagner, M. (1993). *Trends in postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the national longitudinal transition study of special education students*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Wehlage, G. G. (1983). *Effective programs for the marginal high school student.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 235 132).

Wolman, C., Bruininks, R., & Thurlow, M. L. (1989). Dropouts and dropout programs: Implications for special education. *Remedial and Special Education, 10* (5), 6-20.

Zigmond, N., & Thornton, H. (1985). Follow-up of post secondary age learning disabled graduates and dropouts. *Learning Disabilities Research, 1* (1), 50-55.

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer